

## **Public Testimony**

Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad, vice chairs, ranking members, and esteemed members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for having me today. My name is Alex Dahlem and I am a student at Trinity College right here in Hartford and am originally from Hebron, Connecticut. I come before you today to testify in favor of Raised Senate Bill 19, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses.

Sexual violence has been a major issue in recent years on college campuses throughout the state. Trinity is no exception. Although I have never been sexually assaulted, I know many people who have, and one common theme throughout all of their stories is a lack of proper and responsive communication from college authorities. In their most vulnerable moments – moments when communication from support systems should be highest – victims are too often left alone with the memory and long-term effects of their experiences. The implementation of an Amnesty Policy would protect victims and their rights to a safe space and a smooth path to justice.

Another important part of this bill is the implementation of a campus survey to better understand the scope and magnitude of sexual violence in our college communities. At Trinity there are numerous organizations with the purpose of promoting awareness of sexual violence. These organizations, many of which are here today, do amazing work on campus and host events and programming throughout the course of the school year. Despite these efforts to prevent sexual violence, there is no way to ensure that the entirety of the campus will be reached and heard when it comes to stopping future issues.

Furthermore, despite the few statistics that reflect the reported cases of sexual violence, there is no effective mechanism by which Trinity's administration and potential intervening forces can understand how students are truly feeling about sexual violence on campus. We need to have a campus survey that confidentially asks students about their reported or unreported experiences and uses that information to better work with campus organizations to end sexual violence. This information can also be used by campus officials to better understand the struggles that victims face, ultimately allowing them to create a safe space in which all facets and effects of sexual violence can be properly addressed.

Although this legislation is not a final solution to the overall problem of sexual violence, it is a necessary step in the right direction to making all students in Connecticut feel safe on their college campuses. I encourage all legislators to support this bill and promote its passage during this legislative session.